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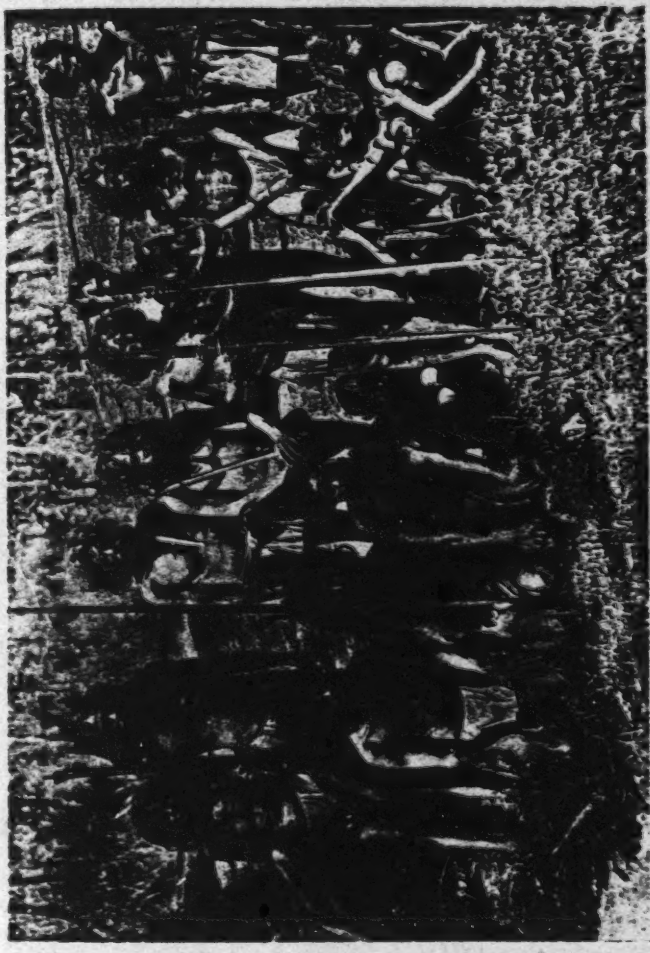
Plate III



Group of Veddas of Henebedda and Bingoda

[facing p.16 b]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

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Plate V

Sinn Wannīya of Hambedda

[facing p. 164]

Plate X

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Fig. 1. A chena settlement of the Henebedda Veddas

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Fig. 2. Henebedda Veddas of the Namadewa clan inhabiting the chena settlement

[facing p. 36]

583 431 said "For profuse with their Daughters in marriage they give hunting Dogs." Among the village Veddas of Bintenne we heard that an axe or cutty was sometimes given, though the Aruchi of Bulligala, who has been much in contact with the Dambani Veddas, stated that these sometimes presented land to their sons-in-law.

In one settlement of village Veddas, Bulugahalakota, we were told that the bridegroom takes a first present to the bride's father and leaves his bow and arrow in his hut until his second visit with further presents some four days later. At the same place the waist string is sometimes charmed to ensure constancy. Among many of the village Veddas the custom of the gift of the waist string is dying out, and the bridegroom gives the bride a cloth as is the custom among the Sinhalese.

Another custom now dying out appears to be the gift from the bridegroom to the bride of a lock of hair, presented at the same time as the food to the girl's father.

303 We discovered at Bendiyeguige that it is a common practice for women to wear false hair. Here we were told that it was merely worn in order to make the knot look important, but only by married women. It is improbable that the habit should have arisen among a people so careless of personal appearance as are the Veddas and it no other significance than adornment, for it must be remembered that these folk never brush or oil their hair, or even wash it; indeed, some consider the last operation extremely dangerous, so that the ornamental value of a very small wisp of hair may reasonably be doubted. Extra locks of hair are worn by Sinhalese women, and we have seen some hanging in the verandah of a mud hut in a small jungle village, but among them it is a very different matter. They are usually, and very rightly, proud of their masses of long glossy hair, which they comb and oil carefully. A naturally large knot is considered a beauty, especially when stabbed with a jewelled pin, and girls as well as married women will wear an extra lock to produce this effect, but that the custom should have been introduced from the Sinhalese with no other object than that of personal adornment, about which the Veddas seem to care so little[1], seems as improbable as does the

[1] The Vedda attitude towards ornament generally is treated on p. 125.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Plate XXI

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Locks of hair presented to brides at marriage

[FACING p. 98]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

hypothesis that it should have arisen among them solely for that object. 302

We believe that a lock of hair, either from his own head or from his sister's, was a customary present from the bridegroom to the bride, and therefore to be considered part of the wedding ceremony. The evidence obtained at Bendiyagalge, though not directly bearing out this point of view, supports the hypothesis when considered in conjunction with the information given us at Sitala Wanniya. The wife of old Poromala at Bendiyagalge wore a piece of hair which Poromala had given her. He had not cut it off his own head but had saved the hair which had come out when combing his hair with his hands, and Handi his wife considered this tail of hair as a valuable possession and said she would leave it to her eldest married daughter when she died. She told us that a woman would burn her lock of hair if she had no daughters. She also said that women would only wear hair from their husbands' heads and laughed at the idea of a man wearing an extra piece of hair, although the men usually wear their hair in the same way as the women. 302 431 585

At Sitala Wanniya each married man was questioned separately.

Handuna, the oldest man and our best informant, said that in former days a lock of hair was always given by the bridegroom to the bride, and if he did not offer it, the young girl might ask for it and insist upon having it. In that case the prospective bridegroom would have to cut it off his own head, if his sister happened to be away at the time or if he had no sister, for it was her duty to give one to her brother if she knew that he wanted it for a wedding gift. A man would always be loath to cut his hair, and there are special regulations against this for shamans, so if the girl is willing to accept him without his present, and he is unable to obtain it from his sister or *naena*, the gift will be allowed to lapse. This happened when both Handuna and Vela married. No man would give hair to anyone except his wife. Kaira gave his wife a lock of hair when he was married, and he obtained it in the following way. He said that when discussing the matter of his future marriage at home, and feeling sore at having no hair to give his bride, his younger 302 431 585 593

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

302 431 585 593 sister said, "Don't be sorry, I will give you a lock of my hair." She cut a lock from her own head, which he kept until his marriage when he gave it to his wife while she was still at her father's cave. Then he took her to his own cave where she made him a waist string on the second or third day after marriage. To his sister who was then unmarried he gave an axe out of gratitude. Nila cut a lock from his head to give his wife, as his sister was away at the time he was married, otherwise she would have given him one. Pema did not give his wife any hair as her mother had given her some.

302 431 585 184 Among the village Veddas at Unuwatura Bubula the custom of giving hair as a wedding gift was not known, yet the shaman's wife had a lock which her mother had given her. She assured us that only married women might wear it.

586 Anything like a formal divorce is unknown, but we heard of one instance occurring three generations ago, in which a woman who had gone to live with her husband left him and returned to her parents. The daughter of a Bingoda man, whose nickname Kupunkarea is still remembered, was given to a boy nicknamed Kankuna "Sore Eyes." As he was lazy and took no trouble to support his wife, so that she was frequently obliged to go to her parents for food, they kept her with them. Kankuna was very angry, but he did not threaten violence or attempt to bring back his wife by force. Later she was given to a Vedda of Bandaraduwa and after his death she went to live with a Sinhalese. It was said that she was an unusually pretty girl.

595 It is quite certain that polyandry never existed among uncontaminated Veddas, but at Henebedda we met with one case that must, we think, be called by this name. Before relating this we may, however, call attention to the fact that polyandry is a tolerably common practice among the Sinhalese peasants of the Vedirata, as it is among the less educated classes in other parts of the island[1].

[1] Cf. *Papers on the Custom of Polyandry as practised in Ceylon*, Government Record Office, Colombo, in which Mr R. W. Ievers, speaking of the Kegalla district, says:—"Having been for six years in charge of a Kandyan district (Kegalla), and having to deal with land cases involving rights of inheritance, and having, as Registrar of Kandyan Marriages, to hear divorce cases, I have found that the custom of polyandry was almost universal; and that in the case of a marriage registered under

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

success in honey gathering, the shaman asked us for two strings of beads. These beads he placed over betel leaves upon two arrows thrust in the centre of the dancing ground which were surrounded by betel leaves offered to the *yaka*. These beads were said to represent the rough rope of creeper with which the green twigs forming the smoker were secured and the rope by which the smoker was lowered to the comb.

When it is remembered that Veddas do not tattoo or paint themselves, and have never been seen wearing any kind of seeds as ornaments, it seems reasonable to assume that where beads are sought after by the Veddas they are valued for their supposed magical properties.

In conclusion we may give the only perfectly clear instance of a Vedda wearing an amulet with which we are acquainted. The shaman of Bandaraduwa wore on his wrist a small silver cylinder such as is commonly used to contain a written charm. The cylinder was empty and had never contained a charm, but the shaman told us that he wore it in order to be cured of an illness from which he had suffered formerly, and that presently he would give the cylinder to some pilgrim proceeding to Kataragam in order that he might deposit it in the temple there.

The Eating of Human Liver.

Every group of Veddas except the most sophisticated village Veddas believe that it was formerly the custom for a man to carry in his betel pouch a small piece of dry human liver. But the majority of our informants were not clear as to the exact reason for doing this, though they were all agreed that it had something to do with raising a man's valour and making him strong to bear trouble. It was essential that the liver should be taken from a man killed by the individual who proposed to carry a portion of the dried liver in his pouch. When a man had been killed the slayer would open his belly and take out a small portion of his liver which he would dry in the sun in a secret place. This custom appears to have ceased about three generations ago, but the following instance, said to have occurred about fifty years ago, was given us at Bandaraduwa.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

ness; in others, that perplexed manner common in people of weak intellect. The women appear sharper and quicker than the men, unless it be that they have less *mauvais honte*, and acquit themselves better before company, but they are the most ordinary specimens of the sex I ever saw.*

The Veddahs bear a very striking resemblance to each other—both in feature and expression. And this is especially remarkable among those of Nilgala, who have preserved their ancient customs more completely than their brethren of Bintenne, who live in a less secluded country, have been able to do.

Their clothing—so to speak—is the most scanty conceivable. A scrap of dirty cloth, scarcely larger than the paper on which I write, supported in front by a string round the waist, being a complete Veddah suit for male or female; for the rag that does duty for crinoline, is scarcely less diminutive than that which represents the male garments† . Indeed, almost the only difference in the costume of the men and women is, that the latter have their ears pierced, and wear in the lobes round studs of ivory.

Neither sex is remarkable for personal cleanliness, and with their rugged unkempt locks half obscuring their features, the Veddahs certainly realize all one's preconceived notions of the most barbarous savages.

Knox's picture of "a Vadda, or Wild Man" is a fancy portrait, and decidedly flattering. They do not "tye their hair on their crowns in a bunch", nor do they indulge in nearly so much drapery or beard as is worn by that stout well-to-do-looking gentleman, who is placidly smoking an imaginary pipe, for smoking is a luxury at which the Veddahs have not yet arrived. The contrast between Knox's idea of the wild men, and their actual appearance, is amusing.

When brought in from their forests to be "looked at," they huddle themselves together like a herd of wild and timid animals driven into a corner from which there is no escape. Attract their attention by a present of rice or cloth, and in an instant they become like eager children, scrambling for a new toy,—forget the presence of strangers, and intent only on what is before them, jostle each other, clamouring for a fair division of the spoil, and complaining loudly against those of their companions whom they suspect of having got more than their share of the good things.

But it is not fair to judge of them when so utterly out of their

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* I saw some of them display the liveliest curiosity at the sight of their "white sisters", two remarkably good specimens of whom found their way to Nilgala in 1857.

† Formerly the sacking-like bark of the "Riti tree" (*antiaris innoxia*, or *A. saccadora*) supplied the place of cloth; and bags made of this fibrous bark are still used by the Singhalese for carrying rice, etc.

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

174 effectual so long as there were no influences to weaken it, but when once a preponderating force came to surround these clans, their chance of survival was small, and to prevent individual extinction amalgamation presented the path of minimum resistance.

The effect of this amalgamation was to break down the primitive methods, and concurrently to infuse new blood, and with it to stay, or lessen, the forces that were weakening an already over-inbred stock.

101 161 If we refer to certain statistics, as recently as 1840 we find that a rough enumeration of the so-called Rock-Veddas disclosed that only thirty families in Bintenna then existed.

Since then the increase of civilized races pressed with yearly greater insistence, till we are forced to conclude that the primitive Vedda is now no more, or nearly so.

142 In my Paper read at the meeting of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society on September 19, 1914, I have described the features of the Vedda family I found at Setawa, but I venture here to repeat it for easy reference.

The man Dissan Hamy is about 5 ft. 10 in. in height, thin, small round the chest, with rather short arms, slender legs, with hardly any calf development. He does not know his age. His head is small, with small dark-brown beady eyes set far back in their sockets. His hair is short, not tied in a [302] knot, staring, and frizzy. His younger brother is shorter in stature, but with the same character of hair on the head. The elder has short, scanty, and bristly moustaches, but in both brothers there is a marked scarcity of hair on the face and body. Dissan Hamy's two sisters are both of normal height, and dress like the other women of the country. They are about 5 ft. 3 in. in height, with slender limbs. Both women are mothers, and both indicated the small breast development that appears to be characteristic of women residing [302 354] in the arid parts of the country I explored. In both women the hair is short and frizzy. Their infants had shaved heads.

I remarked that the skin of Dissan Hamy's body is darker than that of the other members of the family. The nose is strongly formed, with thin dilated nostrils. The mouth is rather wide, with lips of no unusual thickness.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

ladders prepared for us beforehand, we made the laborious ascent; finally shinning up the interlacing roots of an obliging banyan tree that gripped a great hump of rock, we attained the summit of the northern bastion. Here we found the usual signs of old-world occupation: cisterns and seats cut out of the living rock, fragments of brick and pottery, and strong stone walls overrun with scrub and pine-apple.

The height was desolate but for wild cats, and songless but for the boom of wanderoo far below. A ceaseless drizzle blanketed in mist the superb view of forest and hill we commanded; but every now and then the mist lifted and showed the graceful contours of the ranges. There, crouching like a headless beast, its neck indrawn, was magnificent Wadinagala; to the south was the long straight ridge of Moneragala; and close at hand were the twin domes named by the Veddas *Thanagoda* (breast mounds) and behind them *Thanakirigoda* (breast milk mound) with wracks of milky mist caressing their summits.

On our descent we were better able to discern certain features of the rock the rain had so far hidden from us. Out of long horizontal fissures high on the perpendicular face of the hill, projected numerous sticks driven in for foot-hold by honey-gatherers; and dangling from the summit was a long cane that had once borne a daring fellow within reach of seemingly unassailable hives. Here we heard a marvellous tale: A Vedda of Bowala once saw a heap of wax that had accumulated on a ledge which an overhanging brow of rock made inaccessible. Nothing daunted, he armed himself with a torch and sambur-horn, descended by just such a cane as we now saw, and swung himself to and fro within reach of the wax, heating it with the torch each time he approached it. When he thought the mass sufficiently molten he stuck the horn deep into it and waited till it set. Then swinging himself once more towards it and seizing hold of the embedded horn, he leaped on to the ledge collected the wax, and swung off again. He did this year by year. On the last occasion, the horn not being sufficiently secure, the poor fellow was dashed to death among the trees and stones below. His wife who had witnessed the tragedy carried back word, "*Meena kalangkalangaa popehorai*," which being onomatopoeic hardly requires rendering.

Our departure from Bowala was ceremonial. On the path stood a drummer, with two boyish figures disguised from head to foot in dry plantain leaves, that were plaited into tails behind. Their faces were hidden by speckled masks made from fragments of gourd-rind, with slits for eyes and mouth, and a blob of resin with fibres attached for nose and beard. Their bare feet and hands were the only indications that these scare-crows were in reality human beings.

The drummer struck; the dance began. The time twelve noon. The floor a root-ridden path bestrewn with elephant droppings and intercepted by beflowered streams. The walls, bordering forest trees festooned with great lianas on which parrots chattered. The dazzling sky above. For orchestra, the staccato rhythm of the drum, the jangling bells that studded the deerskin greaves of the dancers, the sound of a falling branch perhaps, or the short, sharp clamorous outburst of chirping cicalas. For a mile or more the performers led the way with a swaying two-step dance, hopping circularly on one leg to let us catch up did they outdistance us. At the next village the drummer wore the greaves, and

A [the hill called Westminster Abbey. – Analyst]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5
Gypsies E15
Ceylon

with muscular grace, performed the flower dance to the Peradeniya god for the favour of crops.

The women of Kadiniyaya slunk into their hovels at sight of us. A man sat scraping the hair off a girl's scalp with a blunt knife; another was muttering a spell over some lime juice for a fevered wretch. Swarming blue-bottles and a most unholy odour led to the discovery, in a covered hole, of putrid sambur entrails awaiting the pot; like civilised epicures they apparently fancied their game high!

Wadinagala, the southern Friar's Hood (the mountain that rose to Buddha's bidding), towered before us as we lay encamped in the picturesque little village of Landegama. Here we learnt that a company of gipsies, some fifty strong, had preceded us. These forest gangs, unlike those of the road, are nomadic shepherds, pasturing their herds in the jungle plains. They hunt the sambur with dogs and javelin. Approaching coastal towns from time to time they barter their cattle, and are on the whole fairly prosperous. But a gipsy is a gipsy the world over, faithful to traditions of snake-craft and beggary, and these are no exception, plying their trade among the poor villagers with an eye to a handful of grain or vegetables. Sooner or later we hoped to meet them, but for the present all the evidence we had of them were abandoned hearths and a helpless pup they had heartlessly abandoned.

At Landegama was a hunter who entertained us far into the night with jungle tales. He described to us how leopards caught monkeys. The animal climbs a tree in the line of feeding langurs, and waits concealed. When one of them comes near enough he springs on it and both fall to the ground. Should the attempt fail, the leopard gives forth a series of fearful growls and rushes hither and thither making great commotion; then suddenly becomes quiet and hides. Inquisitiveness is the monkeys' undoing; at first, uttering their cries of rage and terror, the 'ah-he-hik' so familiar to hunters, they look for him from secure heights; but not seeing him they become bolder and bolder and come down lower and lower; until eventually, one pays the price of his foolhardiness.

Wadinagala village, singularly enough, lies farther from the rock of that name than Landegama which nestles at its foot. Here was a medley of huts well illustrating the various types prevalent in the *Vanni*. The roofs of all were *illuk*-thatched; but the walls were various: a few were made of mud, some of wattle and bast, others of wattle and maize sheaths or of leafy twigs; while most had two or more of these combined.

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A sudden shower, that caught us as we rested on the banks of the Palang Oya, proved the harbinger of many wet days to come. That evening we entered Kokunahare in the pelting rain, our clothes, bedding and food deplorably drenched. Rushing into the first hut we found we ousted its occupants with gentle persuasion. Cooking was out of the question; but our ever-ready lunch basket provided a menu of tongue, fruit salad, biscuits and cheese, and a thermos-flaskful of hot tea. What shifts the shivering carriers made for food or sleep we had not the courage to inquire.

3. A VEDDA OF DIVULANA

000 DIVULANA was recompense for our toil. The irrigation bungalow, placed high above the bund, over-looked the beautiful hill-encircled tank, whose glassy surface was broken by stones and snags on which cormorants and darters sunned.

115 Two miles within the forest lived Naga-Kauwa, a witless dwarf of 101 fifty, the sole Vedda of Divulana. Born in Kovil Vannami, he came as a [732] child to the Rasagala caves, of which in their best day his people occupied four or five. Now he and his family alone survived. Three years ago 161 he had abandoned cave life for that of the *chena* ; and there we found him amidst his cassava and the tender teak he nursed for a consideration from Government.

431 His stalwart sons—quite unlike the father—brought us some yams, a 534 mouse deer and a primitive drum—the broken-off rim of an earthen pot covered with wanderoo skin and fitted with a taut fibre.

342 Kauwa's hut was a thing to behold. The Tamils had said, "See Kauwa, this is the way to build a house" ; and Kauwa had built this crazy thing a child of twelve might have bettered. The thatch was a medley of dry grass and bark ; the walls were of wattle, which stuck out untrimmed through the roof, and bark slats so poorly fitted together that there was more aperture than cover. The structure was no more than four-foot square and two-storied at that ; merely a covered trestle three feet off the ground. In the lower floor his wife and children lay huddled like rats ; on the upper, its irregularities smoothed with bundles of rush (primary elements of a mat), the lord and master slept. Such was the caveman's first attempt at fashioning an abode. By the [372] entrance was a fireplace, and, scattered about, were the bones of monkeys and monitor lizards and the carapaces of tortoises that had served for food. Stuck in the roof was a broken comb of buffalo horn, true touch 302 of civilisation, for the test of a real Vedda is that his hair must be stranger to a comb.

115 Getting information from Kauwa was like squeezing water out of a stone ; he could no more describe the simplest thing than he could fly. Still, patience does much and this is what we gleaned :

262 Tortoises and pangolins are considered good eating by the Veddas ; 825 but the porcupine they abhor, calling it a *rodiya* among beasts, and only killing it to give to their dogs. Why Veddas never eat porcupine I have not been able to ascertain : it is said that, in the old lawless days, they would go the length of burning down a Sinhalese hut in which they discovered a porcupine being cooked. Pork they love because it clears the blood, and one or two pigs a month the Vedda must have. Venison causes itching and is not so good !

262 Vedda cookery, simple in the extreme, can still boast some tasty dishes : 252 *Gona-perume* is a sausage consisting of alternate layers of sambur meat 251 and fat. *Le-perume* is the same, with the addition of a third layer of blood-clot. *Goa-thel-perume* is made by skinning the monitor's meaty

18: Kleiweg de Zwaan E-5 (1906-1910) 1925 OB1 Indonesia
Vedda AX5

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Fig. 14. Vedda of the Nilgala Region (Ceylon)

Photo Fr. Sarasin.

18: Kleiweg de Zwaan E-5 (1906-1910) 1925 OB1 Indonesia
Vedda AX5
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Fig. 15. Vedda Woman of the Nilgala Region

Photo Fr. Sarasin.

18: Kleiweg de Zwaan E-5 (1906-1910) 1925 OB1 Indonesia
Vedda AX5

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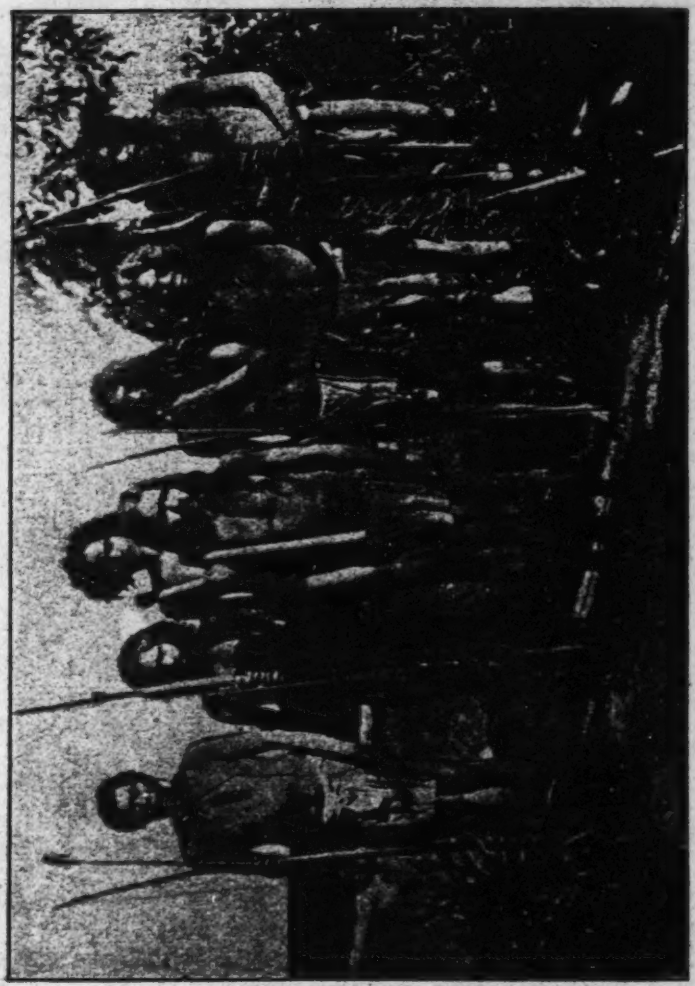

Photo R. Martin.

Fig. 16. Veddas from the Nilgala District (Ceylon)